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House lawmakers moved Wednesday to freeze their automatic pay hike next year by voting to debate the omnibus spending bill.

Republicans, in an unusual move, mostly voted for the Democratic rule governing debate, because they didn't want to be targeted by campaign ads that they voted in favor of raising their pay.

The rule on debate contained the amendment freezing 2010's pay increase, and Republicans said Democrats trapped them into voting for the rule by attaching the pay-freezing measure.

"It was kind of a manipulative thing to do," said a Republican aide. "It was unusual that we supported the rule, especially one on a bill that we have so many problems with, but because of what they did with the pay increase, they could have used that vote against us."

Only 18 Republicans and seven Democrats voted against the rule.

"They had us in a situation where if we had voted against the rule they could have said that we voted against freezing the pay increase," said the aide.

Lawmakers automatically receive a cost-of-living adjustment every year to keep in step with inflation.

But in a period of economic turmoil when many Americans have lost their jobs and are struggling to make ends meet, members have overwhelmingly supported blocking their pay increase in 2010.

Rep. Harry Mitchell (D-Ariz.) has put forward two bills asking for such a freeze since coming to Congress in 2007.

"I've been trying to get this halt on the pay raise since I've been here," Mitchell said. "I was trying to get it on any way I could. So I'm pleased that we're considering it now."

"The important part to me is that we show the American people that we understand the pain they're going through and that of all people we should not be getting a raise when no one else is."

Rep. Paul Ryan (R-Wis.), ranking member of the Budget Committee, said Wednesday that he was pushing to take back the automatic pay raises lawmakers received last month.

"The current bill has a freeze for next year; we think we should freeze it for this entire session," Ryan said on C-SPAN. "I don't know where the support's going to come from."

But the measure that passed Wednesday would only affect member salaries in 2010. And Ryan's office did not answer questions as to how he plans to revoke the pay raise that went into effect in January for members this year. Lawmakers received a \$4,700 pay increase over last year's salary, amounting to an additional \$2.5 million.

"It's already in effect, so it'd be pretty difficult to do," Mitchell said.

Mitchell's bill, with 111 co-sponsors, has received more support than it did last year, when it failed to make it out of committee with only 34 co-sponsors. Almost half of the co-sponsors this year are Republicans, but Ryan did not attach his name to the measure.

The Senate has not made a final decision on its 2010 salaries, though members of the upper chamber are not expected to get a raise next year.

Sen. Russ Feingold (D-Wis.) has offered legislation that would stop lawmakers from getting an automatic pay increase in 2011.

Mitchell has suggested that he would be in favor of a 2011 pay freeze as well if it were necessary.

"If we need to do it, we'll do it again in 2011," he said. "If we're still in the same shape and people are losing jobs and getting pay cuts, then yes, absolutely."

The annual salary for most members of Congress is \$174,000 in 2009. Leadership earns more, with House Speaker Nancy Pelosi (D-Calif.) receiving \$223,500 and Minority Leader John Boehner (R-Ohio) making \$193,400.